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Letter dated 5 December 2003 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to convey the attached communication, dated 24 November 2003, which I received from the Secretary-General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

I should be grateful if you would bring it to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Kofi A. **Annan**

03-64675 (E) 101203

Annex

Letter dated 24 November 2003 from the Secretary-General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization addressed to the Secretary-General

In accordance with Security Council resolution 1088 (1996), I attach the monthly report on SFOR operations for October 2003. I would appreciate your making this report available to the Security Council.

(*Signed*) George **Robertson**

Enclosure

Monthly report to the United Nations on the operations of the Stabilization Force

1. Over the reporting period (1-31 October 2003) there were just over 11,880 troops deployed in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia.

2. On 2 October, command of the Stabilization Force (SFOR) was handed over from Lieutenant General William Ward to Major General Virgil Packett II.

Security

3. The overall situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina remained stable during the period under review.

4. On 1 October, Miloslav Deronjic, who was detained by SFOR forces in July 2003, pleaded guilty before the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia to one count of persecution for his role in the killing of 60 Muslims in the village of Glogova in 1992. Deronjic offered this plea in exchange for a guarantee from the Prosecution that his family would be protected from reprisals. Deronjic is expected to be sentenced in January 2004.

5. On 8 October, Ranko Cesic became the sixteenth war crimes suspect to plead guilty before the Tribunal. Cesic entered a guilty plea on all 12 counts and the Trial Chamber entered a finding of guilty on all 12 counts. The Prosecution is seeking a sentence of between 13 and 18 years in prison for Cesic, who lived in the northern town of Brcko during the war.[1]

6. On 17 October the Tribunal sentenced Blagoje Simic to 17 years' imprisonment, Miroslav Tadic to eight years, and Simo Zaric to six years for their involvement in the ethnic cleansing of Bosniacs and Croats in Bosanski Samac during the 1992-1995 war.

7. On 28 October, Pedrag Banovic was sentenced to eight years of imprisonment by the Tribunal for his involvement in five murders and numerous beatings that occurred at the Keraterm detention camp in Prijedor in 1992. Banovic was detained by SFOR troops in July 1998 and on 26 June 2003 pleaded guilty to crimes against humanity.

8. On 19 October, Alija Izetbegovic died from heart failure in the Kosevo Hospital in Sarajevo at the age of 78. Izetbegovic was President of Bosnia during the 1992-1995 war and was one of the signatories of the Dayton Peace Agreement. On 22 October, he was buried in Kovaci cemetery in Sarajevo. SFOR reports that a quiet crowd of approximately 100,000 people and 400 VIPs attended the ceremonies; no incidents were reported. As a precaution, SFOR units had been charged with providing security, medical support and crowd control throughout the event.

[1] Ranko Cesic beat and killed civilians at the Luka camp set up by Bosnian Serb forces in May 1992 as part of their campaign of ethnic cleansing. He was arrested in May 2002 and transferred to The Hague, where he initially entered a plea of not guilty in June 2002.

Attacks against SFOR and SFOR operational activities

9. There were no significant acts of violence directed against SFOR personnel over the reporting period.

10. SFOR continues to contribute to the maintenance of a safe and secure environment in Bosnia and Herzegovina and to monitor possible terrorist-related threats throughout the country. SFOR remained engaged with Operation Harvest, framework operations and exercises. SFOR operations focused on launching the Operation Harvest autumn campaign 2003 with a comprehensive information campaign preceding the ground operations in November. In October, new weapons and ammunition caches were found in the area of operations: one cache contained approximately 100 M80 rocket systems, while another large cache containing mortars and other heavy weapons was found with the help of local civilians in the Han Pijesak area. This is an encouraging sign of cooperation with the local citizenry of the Republika Srpska. It is assessed that considerably larger caches exist elsewhere in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Local police, the Republika Srpska Army (VRS) and possibly the Army of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (VF) will either assist or run their own Harvest operations.

11. Operation Harvest results in the first nine months of 2003 compared to the same period in 2002 show some significant improvements. Recovery of explosives has increased by 145 per cent and of mines by 32 per cent, while small arm findings decreased by 11 per cent. Small increases were noted in the other areas. Overall October 2003 has been a fruitful month in both areas. The weapons turned in or collected from 1 to 31 October within the framework of Operation Harvest included. 1,273 small arms (rifles, pistols and revolvers etc.); 309,385 rounds of ammunition less than 20 mm; 7,701 rounds of ammunition between 20 mm and 76 mm; 78 rounds of ammunition more than 76 mm; 1,880 hand grenades; 103 mines; 4,427 kilograms of explosives; 10,083 other items (mortars and mortar rounds, rifle grenades, handmade ordnance, attack rocket etc).

12. On 14 October, SFOR carried out searches of the offices of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Federation Ministry of the Interior and the Bosnia and Herzegovina Federation Intelligence Service. SFOR stated that the employees in both offices cooperated fully.

13. On 15 October, SFOR launched a large-scale theatre-wide operation to support approximately 100 representatives of the Tribunal searching for evidence to help prosecute persons indicted for war crimes currently held in the Detention Unit. During the day, 11 target locations were searched and the examination of secondary targets began in the evening. SFOR reported that they received good cooperation from authorities throughout the day.

14. The largest threats to Bosnia and Herzegovina are organized crime, corruption and smuggling. Again, in October, numerous activities of gangs and parallel structures were observed in Trebinje and Bihac. The local authorities and the international community were assisted, where appropriate, by SFOR in their efforts to combat the activities of these criminal enterprises. Drug-trafficking continues with routes from Albania, Kosovo and Montenegro through Bosnia and Croatia. Owing to the large uncontrolled number of tracks and border crossing points between the Republika Srpska and Montenegro, and also to some corruption within local police and the State Border Service, effective border surveillance is difficult.

Besides smuggling, illegal logging remains a significant issue throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina and is assessed to withdraw large sums of money from the legal economy.

Cooperation and compliance by the parties

15. On 16 October, the President of the Republika Srpska, Dragan Cavic, stated that its Government would form a commission to investigate the events in Srebrenica in 1995. The commission will be established within the six-month deadline set by Lord Ashdown.

16. The Deputy Commander of SFOR chaired a meeting with the Chiefs of Defence of the Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina on 20 October. He reminded the group of the processes of defence reform (and specifically the Defence Review Commission report) and the link to membership in the Partnership for Peace. He then outlined the operational and administrative chains of command that will run via the State and entity Ministries of Defence. VF stated that it was about to actively engage with its Ministry of Defence in discussions on how to take the implementation forward. The points of discussion were:

- Command structure (general officer positions)
- Size and titles of units
- Employment and structure of reserves: it was agreed that their command status should be through the administrative command until mobilization and then through the operational command; currently, the Defence Review Commission paper allows for up to 60,000 reserves (40,000 for VF and 20,000 for VRS)
- Locations of units and associated real estate
- Doctrine
- Training requirements and delivery
- Weapons systems and ammunition types.

17. During the reporting period, the Entity Armed Forces have carried out normal training activities, in compliance with the military provisions of the Dayton Peace Agreement. In October 2003, there were no reports of missing weapons from weapons storage sites.

18. There were a total of 132 Entity Armed Forces training and operation activities (75 VRS and 57 VF) during the reporting period and 392 movements (298 VRS and 94 VF) conducted during the reporting period. A total of 501 Entity Armed Forces mine-clearing activities were monitored during the reporting period. SFOR conducted a total of 79 inspections of weapons storage sites during the reporting period (32 VRS, 8 VF-B, 24 VF-H, 15 VF). No VRS weapons storage sites were closed this month.

Cooperation with international organizations

19. Within capabilities and in accordance with its mandate, SFOR continues to provide assistance to the international organizations working in theatre.

Outlook

20. In October, SFOR continued to contribute to a safe and secure environment in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and experienced another productive month for its weapons collection efforts. The Operation Harvest autumn campaign 2003 will build on the success of recent months and entity police forces both in Republika Srpska and the Federation seem eager to coordinate their efforts with SFOR. Cooperation between SFOR and VRS can also be seen in their combined effort to destroy redundant and unstable ammunition in VRS storage sites. These developments, together with the announcement by the Republika Srpska that it will establish a commission to investigate the Srebrenica massacre, suggest that progress is being made towards a more safe and secure environment in Bosnia and Herzegovina and that politicians are serious in their aspirations to integrate Bosnia and Herzegovina into Euro-Atlantic structures.